SECRET

C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 May 1960

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Khrushchev At the Summit

1. This memorandum examines Soviet policy and probable intentions on the eve of the Summit meeting scheduled to open on 16 May. It does not attempt to forecast Soviet moves or positions at the conference except in the broadest terms. Instead it discusses the motives and general strategy of current Soviet foreign policy, and the power base and political situation in the USSR and the Bloc from which this policy proceeds. NIE's done over the last year or so on various aspects of Soviet developments have been drawn upon as background, and more recent indications have been evaluated in the light of these basic estimates.

Khrushchev's Motives in Promoting Summit Diplomacy

2. The Summit meeting of the Four Powers represents the achievement by Soviet policy of a tactical aim pursued more or less consistently for well over two years. Agitation for a new Summit began immediately on the heels of Soviet claims of an ICBM in the

latter part of 1957. It was pressed during the Iraq-Lebanon crisis of mid-summer 1958, but then abandoned on that occasion because the Security Council forum, which the Western Powers insisted upon, probably seemed too confining for the kind of Summit Khrushchev had in mind. The current agreement to hold a Summit finally grew out of Soviet instigation of a crisis over West Berlin beginning in November, 1958.

3. This persistent Soviet interest in Summit diplomacy seems to reflect particularly Khrushchev's own tactical ideas. The move for a Summit in 1955, the first since the wartime meetings, came soon after his rise to predominant influence in the course of the post-Stalin struggle for power. We have remarked in other papers that Khrushchev's motives in this probably included a desire to magnify his own and Soviet prestige; he evidently derives personal satisfaction and, he thinks, political profit at home and abroad from the opportunity to comport himself as the peer of Western statesmen.

4. More fundamentally, however, this interest in Summit diplomacy probably reflects one aspect of a conscious reappraisal, by Khrushchev and his supporters after Stalin's death, of the tactics appropriate to Soviet policy -- "in the current historical period," as the Communists say. Although their published criticism

of Stalin has carefully skirted his derelictions in foreign policy, it is altogether likely that they were determined to change his methods in this field, too. They probably believed that these had produced unnecessary tensions without compensating gains, and had stimulated the West to adopt a stronger, more united and uncompromising posture, thus closing out opportunities which might have been open to Soviet policy. Their own idea was that Stalin's consistently hard-line confrontation of a united Western camp should be replaced by a flexible policy and positive negotiating approaches which would convey to the West a diminution of Soviet aggressive intentions. Such a policy of maneuver, they believed, instead of merely hardening the positions of the two camps, would open up opportunities for actions directed at splitting the Western allies.

5. Some such new general line of forwarding Soviet objectives in an atmosphere of relaxed tensions was probably in Khrushchev's mind from the moment of his rise to power. The visit to Belgrade and the 1955 Summit were conceived as the initial steps of such a campaign. The unforeseen consequences of de-Stalinization in 1956 were so unsettling within the Bloc, however, that it was necessary to draw back to a more rigorous posture. Relaxation of tensions and negotiations with the very Western Powers who had to be blamed

for instigating the Hungarian "counter-revolution" seemed inappropriate for a time. But a year or so later thecall for a Summit could be resumed, and by that time, with an improved "position of strength" thanks to the ICBM and Sputniks, such tactics could even be sold to hard-line Stalinists like the Chinese.

6. Probably by 1958-1959 Khrushchev himself had a somewhat more aggressive view of the objectives which could be pursued through Summit diplomacy. By then he probably believed that, instead of merely relaxing tensions in order to open up new lines of action for more subtle Soviet policies, it would be possible to include a larger element of pressure on the West and by this means to make immediate gains on some issues. At least, his opening up of the Berlin question and seeking to have it resolved at the Summit suggests this. Nevertheless, his original objectives remained. These were, first, to consolidate the Soviet Bloc by finally winning some form of Western recognition for the post-war status quo and the Communist expansion it incorporated, and second, to open up a new phase for Soviet policy in which there could be "peaceful competition" for influence and converts, without excessive tension, everywhere outside the Soviet Bloc, but especially in underdeveloped countries emerging from colonialism.

7. The foregoing statement of the broad rationale underlying Soviet policy in recent years, in which the Summit idea figured purely as a tactical device, reduces to a secondary role another set of motives which some opinion has assigned to Khrushchev. It has been suggested that he needed a relaxation of tensions because he feared the growing danger of nuclear war, or because continuation of the burdensome arms race was too much for the USSR, or because achievement of economic goals of the Seven-Year Plan required a shift of resources from the military sector, or because internal political pressures demanded an atmosphere of peace and more consumer goods. In our view, none of these considerations was compelling for Khrushchev's policy. Insofar as considerations of this kind were present, they reflected what were conceived as secondary objectives of the whole shift of policy in the post-Stalin period. The changes introduced by Khrushchev and his anti-Stalinist group of party leaders were primarily directed toward developing the new strategy and tactics for Soviet external policy suggested in Paragraphs 4 and 6 above.

8. We think it important to make this distinction between the fundamental and the secondary, the compelling and the merely desirable aims of current Soviet policy. We have estimated (in NIE 11-4-59), and continue to believe, that Soviet policy will not

necessarily continue to stress the relaxation of tensions theme. It may turn, if it believes that important objectives can be won, to an attitude of sharp pressure on the West. The case of Berlin already suggests this, and should the Soviets come to believe that their total power position justifies it, there may be pressures in other areas as well when opportunity arises. In this event, the Soviets would probably be willing to forego the secondary advantages of relaxed tensions suggested in the preceding paragraph.

Khrushchev's Assets At the Summit

9. There does not seem to be much doubt that, in Khrushchev's own mind, the cards he is holding as he sits down at the Summit table are strong ones. For two years or more Soviet attitudes have had all the earmarks of a new and genuine confidence. This has been manifested not only in manner and pronouncements, but more convincingly in a willingness to relax somewhat the rules for contact and competition with the outside world. On balance, this more confident state of mind is probably a wholesome development from the point of view of Western negotiators. Even a slight relaxation of the morbidly hostile suspicion of Stalin's time opens chinks which make the Soviet leadership more accessible to Western views and influence. On the other hand, an excess of

confidence is always dangerous in the leadership of a totalitarian state. In our view, it is not likely that the Soviets are yet suffering from an overconfidence that would lead them into arrogant and aggressive behavior through misapprehension of the real relations of power.

10. By all odds the most important single factor in the Soviet mind in the general strengthening of the USSR's position is the acquisition in growing number of weapons capable of striking the US effectively. The Soviets naturally regard it as a very great gain that the posing of a serious strategic threat is no longer a US monopoly. The belief that they can also in some undetermined degree impose deterrence on the West, or if necessary retaliate with great destructive effect, gives tremendous impetus to their policy. It means to them that they can really, for the first time in their history, face their enemies with a genuine conviction of having gained equality at the bargaining table.

11. It goes without saying, of course, that the Soviets try to maximize, by gross exaggeration when they can get away with it, the world's impression of their gains in relative military power. They seem to be fully aware that the first dividend from the possession of modern terror weapons is political, that the old principle that power is in the eye of the beholder applies doubly

to these weapons. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the Soviet military leadership, and Khrushchev himself, continue to make privately a sober appraisal of the current relations of power between East and West. They recognize that they are not in a position to impose their will by military force. They also recognize the great peril in any reckless use of threats to employ force. Thus, despite their satisfaction with what they consider to be real shifts to their advantage in the power balance, Soviet policy is likely to continue to act on the belief, as Khrushchev put it in Peking last October, that it should not "test the stability of the capitalist system by force."

12. Another card Khrushchev values highly is the growing magnitude of Soviet physical resources. In his view the USSR and the Bloc are rapidly narrowing the West's lead in the less specifically military forms of power as well as in weapons. He confidently expects the Soviet and Bloc economies to continue to grow at rates higher than the economies of the West and thus to insure within the foreseeable future a more equal contest insofar as basic physical resources are a factor. This source of confidence seems to be well founded. Even if particular programs and plans should encounter strains from time to time and some planned goals

fail to be met fully, there cannot be much doubt that the Bloc will, relative to the West, dispose of continuously growing resources. This may be especially true in the scientific field, in which the Soviets take particular pride in their achievements, and which is of growing significance for the world power struggle.

13. Khrushchev probably also thinks that among his assets at Paris, thanks largely to his own exertions, will be a considerably improved attitude on the part of world opinion toward Soviet policies and purposes. He is a practitioner par excellence of the style of totalitarian diplomacy, which attempts to make the force of mass opinion an ally at the bargaining table. It does appear to be true that Soviet policy, Soviet power, and even Soviet institutions have gained in world respect under the influence of Khrushchev's remaking of the image of the USSR, greatly aided of course by Soviet space achievements and by the significant changes in internal policy since Stalin. Consequently, Khrushchev can be counted on for a performance at Paris boldly played to the galleries of world opinion, and thus designed to maximize support for Soviet positions and to increase pressure on the Western statesmen for concessions. While "peace" and "relaxation of tensions" will be his main themes, the desire to win popular acclaim will not necessarily cause him to moderate

the substance of Soviet positions. He will act on the assumption that the world will be as much impressed by the USSR's firmness and power as by its reasonableness and flexibility.

14. One audience Khrushchev will have particularly in mind is that in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. He probably considers that Soviet policy must now accept the at least temporary stabilization of the political-social system prevailing in the states of the Western alliance, but believes that these other areas offer excellent prospects for forward movement. It is the political trend in underdeveloped and ex-colonial countries which, almost more than anything else, gives the Soviets a sense that their policy is moving with the tide of history. They believe that political independence and industrialization will sharpen the contradictions between these countries and the older capitalist states. This will give the USSR opportunities to displace Western influence, they believe, and ultimately to galvanize the revolutionary process in these societies to the point where the Communists can achieve power.

15. This is currently one of the fundamental calculations of Soviet policy and figures strongly in Khrushchev's tactics at all times, even when negotiations with the Western Powers occupy

the center of the diplomatic stage. Despite some signs in the last year or so that the rosy prospects for Communist influence in underdeveloped areas have begun to cloud over, Khrushchev is very likely to persist in his policy of cultivating non-Communist nationalist movements and states with political support and economic aid. In his mind, this is probably a long-term policy in which he does not need to reckon on early results, but the eventual benefits of which are nevertheless certain. He is deeply committed to it politically and ideologically. Thus he will have in mind other prospects and other battles beyond the Summit itself. To him everything will not hang on the outcome of this single encounter, dramatic as it may be. He will be as much concerned with the record he makes and the subsequent repercussions for Soviet policy everywhere as with the victories won on this occasion.

16. It is in this field of the prospects for a growing Soviet influence in underdeveloped countries that Khrushchev may be regarding as assets already banked what are in fact only possible future gains. Doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist ideas probably exaggerate the revolutionary opportunities for Communism and greatly underestimate the force of the drive for national independence -- from East as well as West. As indicated, Khrushchev himself probably has a slow-moving

strategy in view, is prepared to play a waiting game, and even to accept some setbacks. It is a question whether his party colleagues will be equally patient. In Communist tradition, any policy of working with "bourgeois" movements is vulnerable to "leftist" attack, especially when the "bourgeois" partners prove faithless and turn on their local Communist allies. The Chinese, remembering how Chiang Kai-Shek did this in 1927 when the Chinese party was following Soviet advice in cooperating with him, are already calling for a purer revolutionary line in the underdeveloped countries. Khrushchev's large personal and ideological stake in his policy on this subject may, though probably not at any early date, prove to have been a hazardous investment.

Some Possible Liabilities and Constraints

17. It has been suggested that Khrushchev's personal position as supreme Soviet leader may depend on his success at the Summit. Faint rumblings of opposition have been detected by some, and have been taken to forecast extreme peril to his personal power unless he returns from Paris like a conquering hero bearing rich gifts extorted from the cowed Western leaders. We are not much taken with this image. The indications which could signify a weakening of his position, chiefly certain personnel shifts in the Soviet

heirarchy, are fragmentary in the extreme and permit of other and more plausible constructions. His whole external conduct of power over the last two years and more indicates an impregnable position. He is after all the vanquisher of all the most formidable figures who survived Stalin. It is hard to imagine that the lesser men who surround him could find a leader or form a faction, and then convince themselves that the risks of opposition were not too high. It even seems extremely doubtful that, as the Soviet system operates, a man who has reached such a pinnacle of success and has already created his own legend of irresistible power can be touched at all.

18. Having said all this we should admit that we have never predicted a major turning point in the power struggles of the Soviet leaders, in part because the evidence available is wholly inadequate to do this, in part because such events are in their nature almost unpredictable. Khrushchev himself was for long an unknown quantity; we failed to appreciate his stature until his power had been virtually consolidated. One other reason for caution in crediting Khrushchev with political invulnerability is that the rules of the game have changed since Stalin's time and observers of the Soviet scene are too prone to draw parallels from that period. Certainly the hazards of political opposition are not as violent or as sudden as under Stalin. Political banishment

is a powerful deterrent to professional party men of rank who might consider opposition, but not quite so powerful as Stalin's "Genickschuss" in the cellars of Lubianka prison. Thus if the wise money must still ride with Khrushchev, cautious gamblers (and estimators) will hedge their bets a little.

19. The one contingency against which Khrushchev's position might not be secure would be a conspicuous failure of some major aspect of his policies. Given the reduced hazards of intra-party opposition, and possibly some adherence still to at least the forms of collective leadership, it is possible that such a failu re could diminish his commanding role if it did not actually result in his replacement. Some of his policies do involve risk of failure and his political style suggests that he may be a gambler who would cover his risks with new risks at even higher odds. Currently the almost open attacks on his policies by the Chinese indicate that he is gambling in a very dangerous area, that of intra-Bloc solidarity. It would probably be a severe test for any Soviet leader if his enemies could charge him with responsibility for ideological confusion and political disruption within the Communist movement. The very fact that the Chinese attack his policies so brazenly may indicate that they think his power position

is already vulnerable on this or other grounds. On balance, however, we do not think there is any solid ground for believing that concern for his personal position will impose constraints on Khrushchev's behavior at Paris.

20. Even if the present Chinese surliness toward Khrushchev does not threaten his personal position, their attacks on his policies do seem likely to have some constraining effect on his attitude at Paris. The Chinese have indicated that his attempt to reach a basis for "peaceful coexistence" by "mutual concessions"* has gone dangerously too far. They argue that he is overestimating the peaceful intentions of the imperialists, undermining the will of the masses to engage in revolutionary struggle, and subverting doctrines on the nature of the world struggle enshrined in the incontrovertible formulations of Lenin himself. Preservation of the Sino-Soviet alliance and of solidarity in the Communist movement generally must necessarily be vital interests for any Soviet leader. Therefore the Chinese attitude cannot be entirely ignored by Khrushchev and it seems likely that he will try in some way to take account of it in his negotiations with the West.

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* This phrase was used in his important speech of Oct. 31, 1959 which contained the fullest theoretical justification for his policies and at the same time the most far-reaching suggestion of the limits to which he might be willing to go to reach agreements with the West. It was almost certainly the formulations in this speech against which the recent Chinese articles in Red Flag were directed.

21. How he might do this is more difficult to predict. He will probably feel under greater necessity to demonstrate that his policy is getting results, either in winning concessions or in dividing the west. This might cause him to increase the pressure behind Soviet demands, or conceivably to move in with concessions of his own if necessary to wrap up more speedily some issue which would otherwise have been allowed to drag out beyond the Summit. This latter might apply especially to nuclear tests or to the impasse on procedure in the disarmament negotiations. He might not alter the substance of his positions at all, but try simply to appease the Chinese by resort to somewhat shriller language. This he may have tried to do already in his recent speech at Baku and in the Supreme Soviet speech of 5 May, although these cases are unclear since on both occasions he was reacting to what he took to be strong US provocations.

22. What he almost certainly will not do is to alter the main direction of his policy in response to the Chinese pressure. This would be an abdication of the USSR's "leading role" and, he would imagine, would lead him down a road which would cost him dearly in the end. On principle, moreover, he probably regards the Chinese as Stalinists and therefore as representing the doctrines and methods which it has been his whole political mission in recent

years to combat. Thus he will persist, whatever the Chinese say, in following a "general line" which permits flexible tactics both in relations with the West and in promoting Soviet purposes in the underdeveloped countries. On this he will be very strong indeed, because he almost certainly thinks that Chinese views are "adventuristic," the Communist jargon for too risky, and that only his own line can advance the Communist cause. All this would not exclude that he might try to appease the Chinese in the area of Sino-Soviet relations proper.

Probable Positions on Summit Agenda Issues

23. Berlin.- The more recent Soviet statements and other indications suggest that, although Khrushchev will make a pro-forma argument for a peace treaty with the two German states and for a "free city" arrangement for West Berlin, the Soviets consider an interim agreement on Berlin to be the serious bargaining area. The elements they would like to see in such an agreement would include reduction in Western troops, control on "subversive activities" and propaganda, restrictions on Bonn's role in West Berlin, and perhaps a supervisory commission, if possible with East German representation in some form. At a minimum, they want a Western admission that the situation is "abnormal" in their terms and that the "occupation regime" must be terminated in a reasonable period, which they would probably set at about two years. The

essential thing from the Soviet point of view is that the impression should be conveyed, especially to the West Berliners themselves, that the West has responded to Soviet demands to the extent at least of taking the first steps toward altering the status of the city.

24. Disarmament - The Soviets probably believe that the Ten Power talks to date have exhausted the possibility of attaching opprobrium to the West for refusing to accept Soviet principles for "general and complete disarmament." Khrushchev may very well therefore make a grand gesture of "concession" in agreeing to terms of reference for the discussion of partial measures. He may also outline partial measures the Soviets would like to negotiate, and these are likely to focus on Central European zone proposals for troop withdrawals and limitations on weapons. The proposals would be drawn primarily with a view to forwarding Soviet political objectives in Germany.

25. Nuclear Tests - Khrushchev probably recognizes that this subject is still too deeply mired in technical issues to permit of any final agreement being reached at the Summit level. But he probably does intend to get credit for taking an initiative which will put the Geneva conference, or seem to put it, on the road to early completion of an agreement. Therefore he is likely to take

up the problem of a quota for on-site inspections and also the terms of a moratorium on underground shots below the threshold of the inspection system. On these and other aspects of the test issue his position is likely to move toward the West's, but only enough to insure that Western opinion will still be divided on whether to meet his terms. He probably still does want a test agreement, however, and will try to impel the negotiations forward consistent with the Soviet objective to minimize the control system.

Khrushchev's Tactical Alternatives at the Summit and After

26. The outcome of the Summit which Khrushchev would almost certainly prefer would be one which showed some movement toward his position on Berlin and Germany, which kept disarmament negotiations alive with apparent credit for this belonging to Soviet initiative, and which in addition maintained an atmosphere of promise for further relaxation of tensions and fruitful negotiation. This would be the optimum result consistent with the broad rationale of his foreign policy strategy described earlier in this paper. This means that he does not want a showdown crisis which would heighten tensions or even a standoff which would leave an impression of the futility of East-West negotiations.

27. On the other hand, he cannot afford to buy a "positive" outcome, one providing for further easing of tensions, at the price of seeming to withdraw all the demands which brought about the meeting in the first place. Such a march downhill from the Summit after having marched up with so much fanfare would be ludicrous and damaging to his prestige, both in the West and among possible doubters inside the Bloc. Moreover, on the Berlin question, except for having removed the time limit for his demands, he has continued in his recent speeches to crawl / out even further on the very long limb on which he is perched. There is a dangerous dilemma in his policy of combining pressure on the West with appeals for peaceful negotiations. If the opponent does not deliver through negotiations at least part of/ the concessions demanded, Khrushchev must either be exposed as a bluffer or he must increase the pressure and accept risks and tensions which are in themselves at least undesirable and which it was his purpose in the first place to reduce. If this dilemma emerges clearly, his mistake will have been to imagine that he could conduct an offensive action on so sensitive a matter as Berlin and still expect the West to accept that his real aim was to relax tensions.

28. Probably he does not yet think that the dilemma referred to above has become too painful or obvious. If so, he will accept the very minimum at the Summit as evidence that progress is being

made. He will reason that the west will not yet conclude that he is bluffing about Berlin and that his threat to take unilateral action will continue to hang over subsequent negotiations. He may calculate that there will sooner or later be an attempt to buy him off with concessions in some other area, most probably disarmament or nuclear tests. He will probably advocate agreement in principle to another Summit, this time in Moscow, not insisting upon a final date but arguing that it not be too long delayed.

29. At the same time, he has laid the groundwork in his last two speeches, notably that of May 5, for charging that "certain circles" in the West, in particular the US, sabotaged the chances for Summit progress. He has interpreted the recent Herter and Dillon speeches in this sense, and also seized upon the plane incident of May 1 to make the same point. Thus if he wishes to do so he is in a position to mount a propaganda campaign blaming certain persons or states in the West for failure of the Summit, and thereby to try to maximize divisions in Western opinion over responsibility for the failure. It will be recalled that a prime object of his strategy is to divide the Western Powers, and if a wedge can be driven deep enough, he would regard this as also a satisfactory outcome of the present phase. An enemy in disarray may ultimately yield more ground than one who retreats in good order.

30. In any case, however he may play the Summit itself, Khrushchev will still have to decide, assuming that there is insufficient promise of progress on Berlin to meet his minimum requirements and no offsetting "positive" result on any other subject, whether to execute his threat to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany. He is probably still reluctant to do so, and this is one reason for believing that he will make every effort to insure that the Summit outcome can be taken as positive. In our last estimate on the Berlin problem (SNIE 100-5-60 of 22 March 1960) we said that should a complete standoff result from the Summit, Khrushchev would probably be driven to take this step, though we left the timing and the manner somewhat open. This is probably still the best estimate that can be made, and if correct could mean that a serious crisis is in prospect. The policy attributed to Khrushchev in this memorandum, although it has the relaxation of tensions as one of its objects, remains a dangerous one -- dangerous to Western interests if it succeeds in the forward aims to which it is also directed, and dangerous to peace if it fails.